



Quixotic travellers



EDITED BY JIM BENNETT



A PK PROJECT FOR DECEMBER 2018

Quixotic travellers

a collection of poetry by poets on the Poetry Kit List

Written for the “gifts” project December 2018

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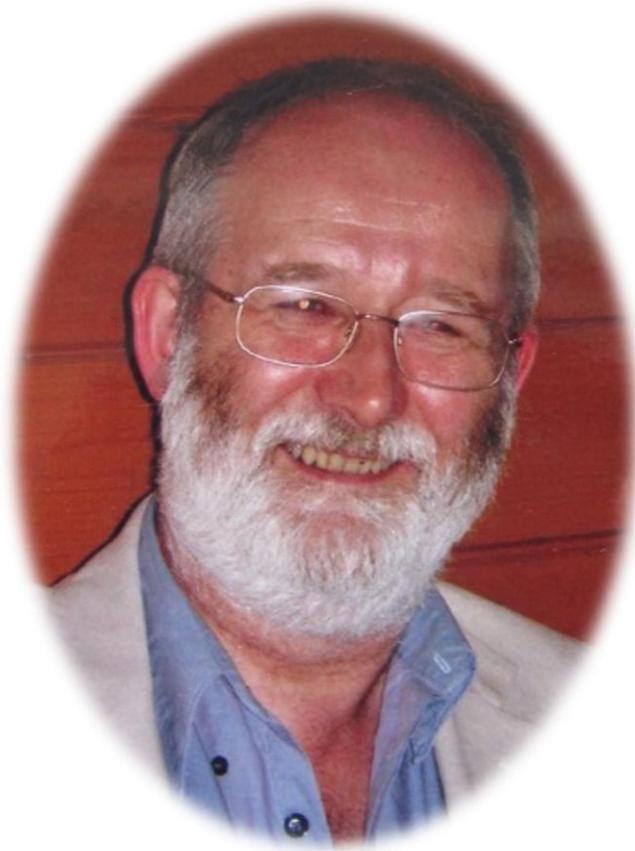
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JAMES BELL

James Bell - has been writing poetry for twenty years. During this time he has published his work internationally online and in print. Two poetry collections have appeared: *the just vanished place* and *fishing for beginners* both from tall-lighthouse. A longtime member of the PK List poetry forum with poems appearing in several of its e-books. His work appears also in a new science fiction anthology, launched in December and called *Multiverse* from a small Scottish publisher Shoreline of Infinity.

JAMES BELL

cardboard

the female refugee sits cross legged
on the gift of thick flattened cardboard
foraged from a local skip or recycle bin -
she is shrouded in a thick blanket
big enough to cover the infant she cradles
her face a studied expression of pathos –
sat in the busy square where passers by
pretend she and the child are not there
while loud Christmas music plays from
a tinselled carousel that whirls round
to forced screams from young girls as
they turn in bucket seats – the change
in my pocket weighs me down – lift
it out and clatter the small coins into
the one time use cardboard coffee cup
she has before her – her face becomes
a smile of delight and I walk away from
my random gift with the knowledge
that more money would never be enough
to make a difference

JAMES BELL

a picture of three wise men from the east

the figure on the leading camel has a bearing
that suggests wisdom in its uprightness where
his crown could be one of the largest stars
in a vast, innocent, cobalt night sky that dominates

the largest star of all is ahead, guides a way
for these unknown astrologers who feel
compelled to make this journey from the east

their clothes are festive, dressed as kings or saints,
exaggerations bigger than the combination
of patterns and designs created deliberately
with the skill of a grown up child

the scene in the picture celebrates
some greatness of portent inevitable for them –
seen again at the ritual time of year
their portrayal on the edge of romance

skirts the borders of historical fact and fantasy
forever rooted in their task to bring gifts
to another king - three quixotic travellers who
might be forever deluded and imagine greatness

ready and willing to miss the point -
intelligent men who know the ready potential
towards the journey for misunderstanding and mockery

JAMES BELL

while listening to Bechet outside the Musée d'Orsay

she wears an expensive old fur - once a gift
from Gallerie Lafayette - as she dances
both have seen better days and nights than these

though older she still dances as Phillippe
and the band plays on
outside the Musée d'Orsay to tourists

to as many tourists as possible who will
buy the CD she offers where
on the cover they all look much younger

play mostly tunes by Bechet – you watch
and listen as they perform –
their pause before they begin *Petite Fleur*

some people look at the sky as they listen
examine clouds for new thoughts
as they move – measure the speed of the world

it turns faster than the music and she too
slows below the sky -
maybe it's her or only the coat that that dances



LESLEY BURT

Lesley's poetry has appeared in magazines over many years, including: *The Interpreter's House*, *Sarasvati*, *Reach*, *Dawntreader*, *Prole*, *Sentinel Literary Quarterly*, *Tears in the Fence* and *The Butchers Dog*; also online, including by the *Poetry Kit*, *Long Exposure*, *The Poetry Shed*, *Algebra of Owls*, and *Ink, Sweat and Tears*.

LESLEY BURT

Escher hands out a gift

His face stares back from the sphere,
eyes wide – the better to see himself –
mouth masked by heavy moustache
that droops its corners. Behind him,
his history fills bookshelves, pictures,
lit by windowpanes that acknowledge
worlds beyond his room. All this
reflected in one hand that offers
so many strangers something of himself.

LESLEY BURT

The Green Man Delivers

In December, for winter's core,
grey-wrinkled as bark and thicker-skinned,
trimmed with white cobwebs, scarlet berries.

His arms creak in north-easterlies;
people talk of golden days remembered,
green to come, as the darkest day descends.

Yet he brings these gifts: ivy, mistletoe,
fir trees scented to take indoors, firewood,
chestnuts, midnight stars, a frosted moon.

LESLEY BURT

The Carters retire to Eastbourne

Sheffield friends promise to write.
Decades pass: news dwindles –
a few lines in Christmas cards.

Cousins die. And old friends.
Marian too. John saves his cards –
each December arranges them

on the mantelpiece
with new ones from the newsagent
and Wiltshire Farm Foods.



BOB COOPER

Details of Bob Cooper's most recent collection can be found at:

<http://www.pindroppress.com/books/Everyone%20Turns.html>

He lives on the Wirral.

A different version of Before The Last Bus For Alston has previously appeared in Smiths Knoll and All We Know Is All We See (Arrowhead, 2002).

BOB COOPER

The Gift In The Party Game

All for one or one for all

We pass the red paper parcel until the music stops.
then stare as fingers tear while it's unwrapped

to show more wrapping, blue this time,
and then, once more, the tune begins.

So it gets handed on - and on - and on
around the twelve of us until, again, silence

except for tugging at paper which reveals more paper.
More music. Then it's my turn to rip, pass it on.

So, the once red, then blue. then red, then blue, parcel moves
quickly, from-excited-hand-to-open-hand until

in the noisy silence the last paper falls to the carpet,
and the gift is finally held by one,

a carton of twelve Ferrero Rocher,
while all we who passed it hand to hand

watch as fingers prize open the lid,
for what will happen next.

BOB COOPER

Before The Last Bus For Alston

contains violence and strong language

After watching the shoving, we all heard the first punch
and his hood came down, the beard came off,
his red coat ripped as one grabbed a lapel in each hand,
lifted him, head-butted him twice ... then he slumped,
just lay there as the boots swung in. It was Auden.
Nowt evvaah changes for yee, each word yelled with a kick
before they up-ended his sack, crouched round the presents,
rummaged through the pile, shook some, then swapped,
but one was too large to cram into a pocket. Laughter
while the youngest looked up and grinned, *It's a boook*,
then stood, eye to eye, facing to me. *Taake it*, he hissed.
It had thick gold paper with a red ribbon. It looked heavy.
He waited. I smelt his beer. The bus doors swished open.
I couldn't refuse. How could I, so near Christmas.



ANNEST GWILYM

Annest Gwilym is the editor of the webzine [Nine Muses Poetry](http://ninemusespoetry.com). Her writing has been widely published both online and in print. She has both won and been placed in competitions in recent years. Her first pamphlet of poetry - *Surfacing* - is available from [Lapwing Poetry](http://lapwingpoetry.com). For more information see: <http://ninemusespoetry.com/surfacing/>.

ANNEST GWILYM

Under a Wolf Moon

Frau Holda shakes out her pillows,
makes the first fragile feathers
of snow fall on the hushed forest.
Sap retreats to rest and keep its nectar
deep as people retreat deep indoors
to await the return of the sun.

In a goosedown cape, with frosted hair,
the White Lady weaves ice flowers,
spins lakewater into a glass ballroom,
knits pearly blankets of snow,
parcels everything up:
a gift to be opened in spring.

ANNEST GWILYM

Days like this to be read as honey

I would give you:
the honeydrip of low sun on the horizon;
a cold that sugar-coats mountain tops,
collides cells and atoms;
all the tree-lined hours of your dreams;
a moonsuck and sunstruck
clock stuck at youth;
four seasons in a day.

In my witchery I would
line up jars of bright starshine
on your windowsill;
conjure Caravaggio days,
raining pomegranate seeds;
trap it all in amber.

And if you ever lived,
you could live it too.



JAN HARRIS

Jan Harris lives in Nottinghamshire. Her poetry has appeared in various anthologies and literary magazines including *Acumen*, *Envoi*, *Snakeskin*, *Ink Sweat and Tears*, and *The French Literary Review*. She was recently awarded a place on Writing East Midlands' mentoring scheme and is working towards publishing a pamphlet of her work.

JAN HARRIS

A pigeon arrived at advent

Angelo, we called him for the season
and his Renaissance wings. A racer,
it seemed he'd rather peck around our feet
than strut with the woodies in the stable yard.

We left gifts in the stall he'd picked
as his roost, bowls of seed, fresh water,
even an upturned dustbin lid on bricks –
a bath to keep his snowy feathers clean.

A week before Christmas, we found him
nested in the straw, as if asleep,
the pony's breath frosted in the air
as if we could hold it, keep it there.

JAN HARRIS

Her words

sometimes playful as Edward Lear's,
with threats to *snickersneeze*
or *mullicrush* us, sometimes
haunting as Plath's -
How can I love you, if you do that!

Her language was Chaucerian
when bodily functions were broached,
though coy about *the curse*.
We never heard her swear beyond
damn and blast it, and wouldn't dare
bring Larkin to the room.

Afterwards, while clearing out,
we opened *the locked cupboard* -
poems in her cursive hand,
never shared, electric
with the cadence of her voice,
her gentle lilt, upward inflection
before a pause that offered space
to talk or change direction.

We unwrapped them carefully
like Carol Ann Duffy's onion,
found her gift inside each one,
still growing like a pearl.



RAOUL IZZARD

Raoul Izzard is a poet whose work has appeared in the anthology, *A Poet's Siddur*, (Ain't Got No Press publishing), as well as the anthology, *Voices from the Cave* (Revival Press).

RAOUL IZZARD

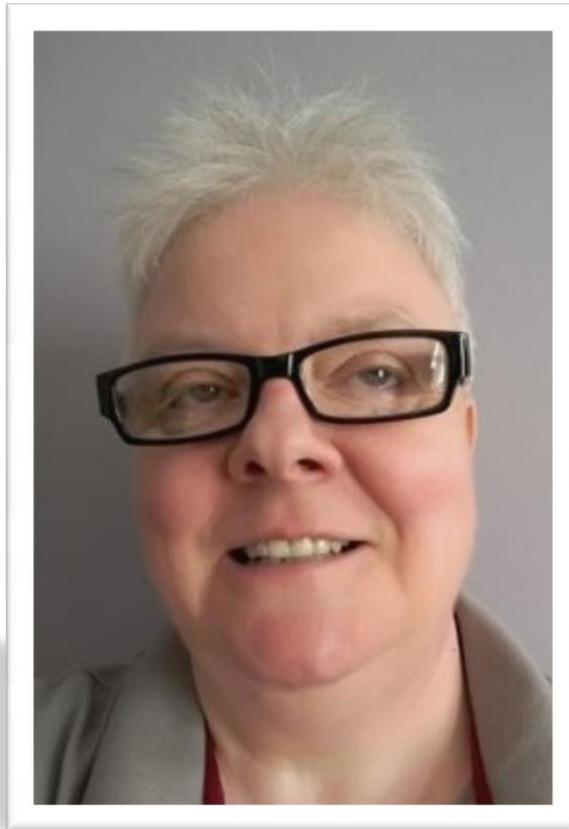
The Virgin and the Donkey

Not the birch but prayers soft as eggshell,
hail the donkey,
the six-foot Virgin,
tethered to its saddle.

Through winding city streets, they go,
coarse-haired beast and lily statue,
air, a thick musk, curt
with shit and incense.

Here, church is skyline and it points
a belled finger to sound the hour.
To men and women out this night,
Lights of casitas aspire to be stars.

A waif, swollen with child, pushes
from the throng to graze the plaster,
as it clip-clops past her fellows
palsy, goitre, rashes, dropsy.



ANNE MAGUIRE

Anne worked for 30+ years in construction project management and estate planning. Since retiring she has used her time to explore a love of writing and learning. She has a published short story, two completed novel manuscripts and a shoe box full of poems. Many need further polishing before being set free. Anne enjoys reading LGBT crime fiction, philosophy/politics/psychology books and lots of different poetry. She also studies MOOC's on poetry and creativity. An active member of the National Trust, she loves exploring old buildings and learning their stories.

ANNE MAGUIRE

The Gift

What to give someone who has what they need?
No books, no socks, no comedy DVDs,
*No more jewellery, she says, I hardly wear it
and techie gadgets are beyond me, she smiles.*
Catalogues arrive on my mat by the gross
promising answers to all of my woes,
they have things for uncles, cousins, aunts,
seemingly for relatives I've never had,
for cats and for dogs and for that someone special
but nothing for mine, despite what they say.
I search but remain lost and ever more anxious
then I hit on the plan, the thing I can give her,
my gift is my focus, my presence, my time.



DAPHNE MILNE

Daphne's first poem was published in a school magazine at the age of ten. Since then she has had work in many grown up magazines and anthologies both in print and on line.

She lives in Australia and has recently been the 'Feature Poet' at Perth Poetry club, read at the Perth Festival fringe and has just recorded a podcast for ILAA radio magazine.

She also writes short stories, flash fiction and prose poems which vary from the darkly humorous to the vaguely sinister. She is currently working on a flash novella and a collection of short stories. Her poetry pamphlet *The Blue Boob Club* is due out in January 2019 from Indigo Dreams Press.

DAPHNE MILNE

He gives her a necklace

A string of beads
each one a memory
round as a baby's cheek
its smooth soft tinted flesh

The knots between rough textured
scabby as a pair of childhood knees
the silk pulled tight as skinfit

Dancing bodies remember heat
red, raw, urgent as a bruise
white satin arms painted
purple, yellow, green

rainbow coloured like these beads
wound about the throat
round and dangerous
a murderer's garrotte.

DAPHNE MILNE

Haiku

Beware the gift horse with good teeth
sweet danger
in the bite of the mare.



STUART NUNN

Stuart Nunn is a retired college lecturer and new grandfather.

STUART NUNN

King William's Birthday Card

Into focus snap the brand-new twins
our hearts are full of this glowing autumn.
What short years
we have to love them.

How long is life?
Long enough to cheer the goals they score
or hear them sing, I hope.
Enjoy again Where the Wild Things Are;
jump together off the escalator;
shell out for school uniform
and hear them read;
let them teach me Spanish;
share the ache of their first crush.

Beyond that,
who knows?
If I'm to see their grins as they announce,
"Grampy, I got a first,"
I'll have to hang on
for King William's birthday card.



GRANT VAN WINGERDEN

Grant van Wingerden is a poet who takes his inspiration from an outback childhood and a youth spent going to gigs and haunting record stores. He has made his home in the beautiful Blue Mountains where he connects with the various creative folk who dwell there.

GRANT VAN WINGERDEN

Rapt

I meant to send some sentiment
to match the batch of enrichment
The playful ploy for a safer toy
the junk and the junkets to bring
children joy

From unedifying and artificial
through sacred cum sacrificial
Securing a second guess
A miss'll tow me out to see
flag the flogging of filigree